

MINUTES
SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, March 02, 2023

TIME: 8:00 A.M.

PLACE: Room WW53

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Hartgen, Senators Foreman, Hart, Schroeder, Dunn (Carlson), Zuiderveld, Semmelroth, and Taylor

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Vice Chairman Nichols

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Hartgen** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Foreman** moved to approve the Minutes of February 14, 2023. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Senator Schroeder** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of Blake Hollingsworth to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to the floor with the recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Senator Taylor** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of Karen Jachimowski Sharpnack to the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission to the floor with the recommendation that she be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

GUBERNATORIAL APPOINTMENT VOTE: **Senator Semmelroth** moved to send the Gubernatorial appointment of Mitchel Silvers to the State Soil and Water Commission to the floor with the recommendation that he be confirmed by the Senate. **Senator Carlson** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Hop Growers Commission (IHGC), Idaho Apple Commission, Idaho Cherry Commission Annual Reports. Candi Fitch**, Executive Director, gave a brief overview of each commission. She pointed out the Hops industry in Idaho had grown substantially with the expansion of craft beer breweries in the state. In 2018 Idaho placed second in the nation for hop acreage planted and hop yield. The yields for the 2022 season were average to below average with the market experiencing a surplus. For 2023 the larger brewers asked for a 10,000 acreage reduction, Idaho would see 1,000 - 2,000 acres removed due to COVID-19, the demand had slowed and supplies had not been used (Attachment 1, 2, and 3).

Ms. Fitch highlighted the Idaho Apple Commission, she stated Idaho farmers helped pioneer the apple industry in the northwestern United States. Idaho's terrain, microclimate, volcanic soil, and abundant water supply provided the essential elements to guarantee a superb tasting apple. She remarked the 2022-2023 season had been difficult for the Idaho Apple Industry, the weather had been detrimental for crops, in addition to the increased prices for labor, fertilizer, and fuel. **Ms. Fitch** mentioned marketing through social media, local radio advertising, ads in Produce News and, in-store displays helped to promote Idaho Apples (Attachment 3).

Ms. Fitch reviewed the Idaho Cherry Commission, she stated Idaho produced 1,400 tons of cherries annually, they had been grown in Idaho for over 100 years. Most of the cherries grown were in the Sunny Slope area with some in Payette and Washington counties. She mentioned with in-store promotions and social media posts there was increased sales (Attachment 3).

INTRODUCTION: **Idaho Eastern Oregon Seed Association (IEOSA) Introductions and Opening Remarks.** **Roger Batt**, Executive Director, stated the IEOSA was the only organization that represented the entire seed industry and trade. The IEOSA had a saying, "it all starts with the seed", it was the cornerstone of agriculture. If you do not have the seed, you do not have food. He mentioned there were 50 different species of seed crops produced in the state of Idaho with hundreds of varieties from those different crops. **Mr. Batt** cited Idaho as one of five major global seed production regions. The seed industry generated \$600 million for the state, this included research and development, and paying the growers. Idaho shipped to over 120 countries worldwide, that money stayed in the local economies.

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Bean Industry.** **Gina Lohnes**, Trinidad Benham, declared that Idaho produced the highest quality, disease-free bean seed in the world. The Idaho certified seed, guaranteed that the seed met or exceeded the strict quality-control standards set by the Idaho Crop Improvement Association (ICIA). The Seed Stock programs were maintained in Idaho by USA and International seed companies.

Ms. Lohnes mentioned urban sprawl was taking over farmland, it decreased the number of farms in Idaho by 800 from 2010 - 2019. Idaho ranked seventh in 2018 and fifth in 2019 for production. She cited Idaho's supply was eight percent of the nations edible dry beans even with decreased acreage being farmed.

Senator Zuiderveld inquired about the reduction of crop beans, was it due to the dairy industry. **Ms. Lohnes** replied, there was competition for acreage to produce food crops, and feed crops to feed dairy cows. Acreage that used to grow hay, potatoes, and sugar beets are now growing feed corn (Attachment 4).

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Popcorn, Onion Seed and Sweet Corn Industry.** **Anita Kiser**, Crookham Company, and **Selena Virden**, Illinois Foundation Seeds. **Ms. Kiser** stated Idaho had been growing popcorn for over 112 years, the state was the only popcorn seed company outside of the Midwest. She inquired if anyone had ever purchased colored popcorn, there was a 100 percent chance it came from Caldwell, Idaho, and said half of the popcorn seed grown in Idaho was shipped outside of the United States.

Ms. Kiser talked about onion seed production, it was a biannual crop. Idaho growers produced 20,000 of the 105,000 acres of onions produced, and purchased \$9.45 million dollars of onion seed annually. Onion growers need seeds, the only U.S. owned company that produced and sold onion seed was in Caldwell, Idaho.

Ms. Virden presented sweet corn seed and why it was produced in the Treasure Valley. It was due to the high desert climate and low humidity, which contributed to less bacterial and fungal pressure on sweet corn seed crops. With minimal precipitation in the late summer/early fall, it allowed the seed crops to dry down. She cited Idaho had a high percentage of furrow irrigation which allowed for better pollination and seed quality than overhead irrigation.

Ms. Kiser stated that 70 percent of the world's global sweet corn seed

production was in the Treasure Valley of Idaho. There was 6,000 acres of production with an estimated total of 8.5 million pounds of seeds with an approximate value of \$18 million. She mentioned the future challenges of urban sprawl and development could encroach on some of the best seed production land. Irrigation was vital and challenges brought against water rights was always a concern.

Senator Zuiderveld inquired about the chemical label registrations being canceled in the USA and abroad. **Ms. Kiser** responded that some seed treatments had been cancelled, and other modes were less effective than the chemicals registered.

Chairman Hartgen asked if the labeling still had the chemicals used on it. **Ms. Kiser** replied the labeling restricted them from using the chemicals (Attachment 4).

PRESENTATION: **Idaho Cover Crop Industry, Kevin Osborne.** President, Allied Seed, defined Forage Crop - a crop specifically grown to be grazed by livestock or preserved as hay or silage, and Cover crop - a crop grown for the protection and enrichment of the soil. He stated Idaho ranked first in the U.S. for production of certified organic hay, and was the second largest producer of alfalfa hay. Approximately 8,000 acres of alfalfa was grown for seed in 2022.

Mr. Osborne mentioned cover crops, Legumes - clover, peas, and lentils. Grasses - barley, oats, corn, and wheat. Brassica - turnips, collards, kale, radish and mustard. The benefits were erosion control, pollinator attractant, nematode control and weed suppression to name a few. He stated the importance of cover crops for Idaho. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Partnership with Farmers For Soil Health initiative had a goal of doubling the number of corn and soybean acres using cover crops to 30 million acres by 2030, he mentioned 50 million acres of cover crop would require 1.2 million acres of seed production, someone had to produce that seed (Attachment 4).

PRESENTATION: **Seed Treatments. Richard Fillmore,** The McGregor Company, presented seed treatments, they prevented the spread of plant diseases by systemic and non-systemic modes of action (MOA), protected the seed from seedling rot and seedling blights. It improved germination and provided protection from insects and pests. **Mr. Fillmore** stated they used colorants, it signaled the seed had been treated, it could also differentiate varieties, and treatments. Challenges for the seed industry was loss of farmland, irrigation and keeping pesticide labeling (Attachment 4).

PRESENTATION: **Industry Issues and Closing Comments. Roger Batt,** Executive Director, IEOSA. closed the presentation with seeds industry issues. The loss of farmland, the uncertainty of irrigation water, and keeping pesticide labels. He mentioned the seed industry contracted only 50 percent of the bean crop due to the water shortage. They had developed an Idaho Oregon Seed Pesticide Council to specifically look at new product labels to move products forward with production (Attachment 4).

Senator Hart inquired how much water a developed subdivision used per acre compared to when it was agricultural land and did the water rights transfer. **Mr. Batt** replied, residential used more water than agriculture land did and as for the water rights, the rights transferred upon the sale of the land in most cases, and could also be sold separately.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Hartgen** adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.

Senator Hartgen
Chair

Melissa Price
Secretary